

**Regulatory Amendment 14 to the Fishery Management Plan for the
Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region
(Regulatory Amendment 14)**

*Frequently Asked Questions
April 2014*

What is the purpose of Regulatory Amendment 14?

Regulatory Amendment 14 would:

- Revise the current fishing year for both commercial and recreational sectors of greater amberjack from May 1 through April 30, to March 1 through the end of February.
- Revise the current commercial fishing year for black sea bass from June 1 through May 31, to January 1 through December 31.
- Establish a new commercial trip limit for black sea bass. Black sea bass pots are prohibited from November 1 through April 30. From May 1 to October 31, the trip limit would be 1,000 pounds gutted weight for black sea bass pots. From May 1 to December 31, the trip limit would be 1,000 pounds gutted weight for hook-and-line gear. The hook-and-line gear would be restricted to a trip limit of 300 pounds gutted weight from January 1 to April 30.
- Revise the current recreational fishing year for black sea bass from June 1 through May 31, to April 1 through March 31.
- Revise the black sea bass recreational accountability measure to have NOAA Fisheries announce the length of the recreational season for black sea bass annually in the *Federal Register* prior to the April 1 recreational fishing year start date. The fishing season would start on April 1 and end on the date NOAA Fisheries would project when the recreational sector's annual catch limit would be met for that year.
- Revise the commercial trip limit for gag from the current 1,000 pounds gutted weight, to include a trip limit reduction to 500 pounds gutted weight, when 75 percent of the gag commercial quota is reached.
- Modify the recreational accountability measure for vermilion snapper by implementing an in-season closure and an annual catch limit overage adjustment (payback) in the event an overage of the recreational annual catch limit occurs. If recreational landings reach or are projected to reach the recreational annual catch limit, recreational harvest would be prohibited for the remainder of the fishing year. Payback of a recreational annual catch limit overage in the following fishing year would occur if vermilion snapper are determined to be overfished and the total annual catch limit (combined commercial and recreational annual catch limits) is exceeded.

Why is Regulatory Amendment 14 necessary?

- Regulatory Amendment 14 is necessary to enhance economic yield from the commercial harvest of greater amberjack; allow co-occurring black sea bass and vermilion snapper to be harvested at the same time; extend the commercial fishing season for gag; and protect the populations of greater amberjack, gag, black sea bass, and vermilion snapper.

Who would be affected by Regulatory Amendment 14?

- Commercial and recreational fishers who fish for greater amberjack, black sea bass, gag, and vermilion snapper in federal waters (3-200 miles offshore), off North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

When might Regulatory Amendment 14 be effective?

- Following the comment period on the proposed rule, a final rule would be published, and regulations could be effective by Summer 2014.

How can I comment on the Proposed Rule for Regulatory Amendment 14?

- NOAA Fisheries is accepting comments on the proposed rule for Regulatory Amendment 14 from April 25, 2014, to May 27, 2014.
- Comments on Regulatory Amendment 14 can be submitted electronically via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0052, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. Written comments can be submitted to the address below.

Where can I get more information on Regulatory Amendment 14 and its Proposed Rule?

- Contact NOAA Fisheries
By Mail: Southeast Regional Office, c/o Nikhil Mehta
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
By FAX: (727) 824-5308
By Phone: (727) 824-5305
- Regulatory Amendment 14 and its Proposed Rule may be found online at the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site at:
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2014/reg_am14/index.html
or the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.